

Dear Friends of High Falls Gardens,

Yes, we're still here, going strong -- haven't faded into the mists to live with the fairies, absconded to Rio with the checking account, or otherwise forgotten about you. I do apologize for being out of touch for so long. There are several good excuses (see below).

But first, having broken all previous records for tardiness of this newsletter, I'd like to make a special offer to all members in good standing as of September 1998. Not only will you receive at least all four of the newsletter issues that you paid for (however long it takes to publish them!), but upon your request I'll be happy to send you a free reprint of the paper presented at the Herb Growing & Marketing Network conference this past January, entitled *Issues in Chinese Medicinal Plant Production*.

Before I report all the news since last summer, let's take a look at what's happening now at High Falls Gardens. The plants are still snug underground, while the only sign of spring is that the birds returned around the first of March. But they've been kicking themselves ever since. This new Year of the Rabbit has already shown a surge of interest in traditional Oriental medicine and the cultivation of Chinese medicinal plants in particular; we feel it in an increased volume of inquiries, emails and phone calls.

Our basic goals for the year are to continue to work with our cooperating growers and to add as much diversity to the main garden as possible. We have formalized our advisory board and are actively seeking new sources of funding. A practitioner education initiative (see article on page 2) will further our efforts to organize and consolidate a market for traditional Chinese medicinal plant products.

And, looking back a few short years, I have finally accepted the reality that *The View From High Falls Gardens* is a triannual, not a (LETTER, continued page 4)

SAVE THE DATE!

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| March 27 | HFG Workshop in Millbrook, NY
Institute for Ecosystem Studies |
| Aug. 14 | Garden Weeding Party (Practitioners) |
| Sept. 18 | HFG Annual Field Day |
| Oct. 16 | Garden Clean Up Party (Practitioners) |

**NEWMAN VISITS HERB GROWING
AREAS IN CHINA**

Robert Newman, famous plant-person and center of the network of Chinese medicinal plant cultivators in North America, ended his eighteen-month stint as curator of the medicinal plant garden of the Nanjing Institute of Botany in China as of December 31st, 1998. But not before he was able to briefly tour cultivation areas in the provinces of Jiangsu and Anhui.

Anhui, about the same latitude as Georgia and Arkansas (32° N), is an area of extensive herb cultivation in eastern China. The small city of Bozhou boasts the largest herb market in the nation, and at least thirty different crops are produced nearby. Last October and November Robert saw farmers harvesting roots there, using big steel drums filled with rocks and water to clean the material, then spreading it out on the road to dry.

The overall layout was small plots (less than an acre) of any one plant, with several of these growing near each other. Each farmer seemed to be responsible for two or three crops; whether this was on their own land, leased land or a collective enterprise, Robert was unable to determine. But he spotted *Polygala tenuifolia*, grown for Yuan Zhi, *Trichosanthes* grown right on the ground rather than trellised -- probably *T. uniflora*, the species grown for the root remedy Tian Hua Fen ("Heavenly Flower Powder"), *Atractylodes macrocephala*, *Achyranthes bidentata*, *Angelica dahurica*, *Astragalus*, *Platycodon*, *Peony lactiflora* and *P. suffruticosa*, two forms of *Salvia*, and others. Farmers there lost several crops last year from rotting due to heavy rains.

Robert realized that some of these perennials are dug up and moved every couple of years in a combination of harvesting and an effort to keep plants healthy and predator-free. No tractors or other heavy equipment were in evidence, so our assumption is that this is all done with human labor. He ascertained that plants harvested every two years include *Astragalus*, *Scute* (*Scutellaria baicalensis*), *Pseudostellaria heterophylla* (for Tai Zi Shen) and *Glehnia littoralis* (Bei Sha Shen). Two years for these plants is shorter than we had anticipated. Others such as the Peonies are on a longer cycle of perhaps four years.

In Sheyang in northern Jiangsu, the seacoast province just northwest of Anhui where the provincial capital of Nanjing is located, Robert saw (Newman, cont'd. p. 2)

(NEWMAN, cont'd. from p. 1) White *Atractylodes* and *Astragalus* growing relatively close together in rows. *Platycodon*, *Angelica dahurica* and *Dictamnus* were nearby. The soil was a sandy loam.

Within the city limits of Beijing on another occasion, Robert observed fields maintained by the government's Institute of Medicinal Plant Development (IMPLAD). He saw what looked like at least an acre of *Phragmites communis*, a marsh reed that grows wild along the eastern U.S. coast, the rhizomes of which are an important medicinal, Lu Gen. There was *Eupatorium fortunei*, Pei Lan, and also *Rehmannia glutinosa*, Chinese Foxglove Root, growing in raised beds of moderately sandy soil interspersed with irrigation ditches. The *Rehmannia* seems to be harvested every year, as the roots would probably rot if not separated regularly. The cultivated form for Sheng and Shu Di Huang has larger roots. It's still also wildcrafted, and Robert has observed it growing wild in hard dry clay in disturbed areas. ■

ADVISORY BOARD FORMED

In support of High Falls Gardens fundraising efforts, several very special people who have lent their valuable advice and counsel to the project over the years have consented to allow their names to be listed as advisors.

The board now includes: Alice Chun, R.N., of Briarwood NY, a health professional active in Chinese-American community affairs; Lyle E. Craker, Ph.D., of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, professor, plant scientist and specialist in herbs; Andrew Ellis of Berkeley CA, practitioner and coauthor of well-known textbooks in traditional Chinese medicine; Steve Gilman of Ruckytucks Farm, Stillwater NY, farmer and president of the Interstate Council, Northeast Organic Farming Association; Edith Lee, R.Ph., L.Ac., M.T.O.M., New York NY, practitioner and teacher; Robert Newman, L.Ac., M.S.T.C.M., Sherman Oaks CA, plant specialist, curator of the medicinal plant garden of the Nanjing Institute of Botany 1997-98; and Jeffrey C. Yuen, The Swedish Institute, New York NY, Taoist priest, teacher and practitioner. ■

HFG LAUNCHES PRACTITIONER EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Domestic production of Chinese medicine plants, currently an exciting area for research, will remain an academic exercise without one crucial element. Producers need a market -- a market that prefers domestic produce to the imported, which is not a trivial distinction where food is concerned.

As its contribution to the producer/consumer relationship, HFG has begun to develop educational programs for practitioners of Oriental and western herbal medicine. To date, we have submitted a proposal to the National Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine concerning the matter, are consulting advisors and

practitioners on program development, and are pursuing funding from private foundations. Three types of programs are contemplated:

- Cultivation of Medicinal Botanicals: Context and Considerations

Format: A workshop, three to six hours in length, to include lectures, audiovisuals, and discussion.

Synopsis: A general understanding of contemporary agriculture is pertinent to the development of clinical herbalism for several reasons, among them the urgent need to relieve worldwide pressure on wild plant populations and the continued uncertainty over the quality of imported remedies.

PRICE CUT ON DOC FILM

Videocassettes of the stunning Swiss documentary, *The Knowledge of Healing*, are now available for \$49.95, reduced from the \$100 price set last year after the film ended its all-too-brief run in a few art film cinemas in the U.S. Directed by Franz Reichle, winner of awards in Europe, reviewed with raves in the *New York Times* in November of 1997 and in this newsletter Winter 1998, the feature-length film shows traditional Tibetan physicians at work in Siberia and India. There are panoramas of wind-swept tundra, glimpses of the secluded mountaintop headquarters-in-exile, closeups of the compassionate faces of people who fully infuse their practice of medicine with spirituality, and -- by the way -- shots of herb gathering, processing and preparations. This film deserves to be part of every good library on Oriental medicine.

The U.S. distributor, In Pictures, moved from New York to Los Angeles (1024 12th Street #1, Santa Monica CA 90403) and has made the videocassettes available through their website, inpictures.com. You can also order them by email at inpix@earthlink.net or by phone at 310-451-8722. (In Pictures' Phillip Marques told us that in late April his company will premiere in New York a new documentary, *In Search of Kundun*, featuring interviews of Tibetan people done by Martin Scorsese as background research for his commercial film.)

Due to the current economic status of world agriculture and trade, a widespread effort to cultivate the Chinese medicinals faces several problems that may not be solved without an active involvement of the practitioner community. Both growers and practitioners need to understand each other's needs and points of view. In addition, practitioners need an understanding of recent developments in agriculture; such knowledge not only affects their ability to procure clean, high quality remedies grown